

Dear George,

7/21/70

This is FY I, requiring no response.

When I wrote you about Cronkite in GJR I had not seen the piece. I'd been told about it. Now I have a copy and it has him saying more than I referred to, "I've always thought there was a second person involved..."

But he also said:

"I wonder how much has been hidden that we don't know." And,

"I do know that I interviewed the late President Johnson, and he said to me that he had some feeling that it might have been a conspiracy, and he then asked that <sup>that</sup> ~~it~~ be stricken. And we did, under some duress, strike that."

On the second, I think you may be reading it soon because not knowing that Cronkite had gone this far I gave it to a friend in the print press. It is one of the most Byzantine of stories.

LBJ or Cronkite understated enormously. LBJ was convinced there has been a plot, the word used in the record I have.

How he was convinced, by whom, and his co-conspirators is quite something.

I'm not teasing. I've given this to another in good faith and I have to protect him and his story.

About "how much has been hidden," I don't think Cronkite or CBS really want to know, meaning what is no longer secret. Not when they spent a million bucks and came up with nothing.

If the corporate mind ever changes I'll be interested and, I think, helpful.

Best wishes,

Harold Weisberg



unostentatious as possible—to avoid the lights if we could and to keep the cameras as hidden as we possibly could, to make our presence as invisible as we could possibly make it. We also learned, although the lesson has not been universally accepted, that a riot on one street corner does not mean that a whole city is in flames.

#### **On Tom Wolfe's book, *The Right Stuff*, and how the media treated the astronauts:**

To an extent we missed a story. But that wasn't really so much our fault as it was the fault of the space administration and the astronauts' exclusive contract with *Life* magazine. *Life* missed its own story and we were frozen out. They were telling only the happy side. All of us who were covering the story did know the peccadilloes of the astronauts and their life on Cape Kennedy to a certain extent. But I think there was some justification for not exploring their personal lives. I think that when a congressman gets so drunk he can't perform his services to the public, then it should be exposed. But I don't think this was affecting the astronauts' work and I don't think it was fair game at the time.

#### **On the assassination of John Kennedy:**

I wonder how much has been hidden that we don't know. I do know that I interviewed the late President Johnson, and he said to me that he had some feeling but it might have been a conspiracy, and then he asked that that be stricken—and we did, under some

duress, strike that. I've always thought that there was a second person involved in the thing, but not in the manner of a grand conspiracy. But I still don't believe, despite the House committee's investigation, the multiple gun theory. We did a long investigation of it ourselves. We spent almost a million dollars, and we could not establish that second gun thing—the man-on-the-knoll idea. But I wonder now, with the CIA plot to assassinate Castro, about the possibilities of setting up something of this kind for whatever international purpose. I'm not as happy as I once was with the Warren Commission Report.

#### **On covering political campaigns:**

All of us have been the beneficiaries of a new form of political journalism that Teddy White brought to us. He was the one who began digging into the mechanics of campaigning. I think we—particularly the writing press, but television as well—swung over to looking at the mechanics, at the organization of the campaign, the campaign managers, the media managers, the pollsters. We were dealing almost exclusively with that, rather than paying attention to the candidates and what they stood for, and what they were saying. We're kind of coming back now from this big pendulum swing.

#### **On coping with overcommunication:**

With instant communication today—these 1,200-word-a-minute printers or whatever they are—we can't even absorb it on the desk of the *CBS Evening News*, let alone re-form it in twenty-four minutes for the public. We've got a pile of AP and UPI copy in that office that defies reading. But I think that with cable and retrieval systems and so forth, we're going to be able to present a lot more information to the public than we ever have before: they'll go to one channel for all the financial news, and another channel for all the consumer news.

#### **On the question of whether TV news caters to the middlebrow mind and tastes:**

Yes, if you appreciate that that means raising the level of the mass to middlebrow. But those whose ceiling would be higher anyway are likely to go elsewhere. *Harper's* and *Atlantic* will still be published. There is no indication that the ceiling is being lowered, but the floor has been raised.

#### **On the question of whether any newsperson is worth eight million dollars over five years:**

Compared to a rock-and-roll singer? Yes. Compared to a teacher? No.